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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 002450

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [MASS](#) [EPET](#) [KPKO](#) [KCRIM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH NIGERIAN NATIONAL
SECURITY ADVISER MUKHTAR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lisa Piascik for reasons 1.4.(b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Nigerian National Security Advisor Mukhtar welcomed Deputy Secretary Negroponte's November 12 visit as USG recognition of Nigeria's importance and the Yar'Adua government's efforts to correct problems associated with the April 2007 elections. Mukhtar described the GoN's efforts to bring peace to the Niger Delta. He acknowledged corruption and past failures by all levels of government in the region, but also blamed oil companies and the international community, citing oil bunkering, weapons smuggling, and money laundering as key problems which needed to be addressed before the situation could improve significantly. Mukhtar requested USG and international community assistance with technical equipment and enhanced intelligence sharing to help detect oil theft and weapons smuggling by international arms dealers, and asked that countries stop allowing stolen funds to enter their banking systems. The Director General of the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) discussed recent arrests of Islamic militants in the North, noting the militants had been trained in terrorist camps in Algeria and Mali, and were planning attacks on unspecified foreign targets in Nigeria. END SUMMARY.

U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONS

¶2. (C) Mukhtar thanked the Deputy Secretary for his visit, noting that he and President Yar'Adua considered it an affirmation of U.S. belief that Nigeria played an important role in Africa and the region. He said the visit indicated that the USG believed the GON was taking steps to address problems related to the difficult and controversial April 2007 elections. Mukhtar outlined numerous historical and cultural challenges Nigeria faced in implementing democracy and asked for USG understanding when formulating responses to less-than-perfect elections. The Deputy Secretary affirmed the USG's understanding of Nigeria's importance, and stressed that it was in the U.S. interest to have a strong relationship with Nigeria. The Deputy Secretary highlighted his recent visit to Darfur, and his meeting with the Nigerian commander of the United Nations force there to illustrate Nigeria's critical role in Africa.

NIGER DELTA

¶3. (C) The Deputy Secretary asked for Mukhtar's views on the Niger Delta, noting that he had briefed President Bush on the region several times when he was Director of National

Intelligence. Mukhtar acknowledged that residents of the Delta had legitimate grievances, and that previous Nigerian federal and state governments had neglected the region, allowing environmental degradation and corruption to continue over long periods of time. He also blamed international oil companies for contributing to the current situation by entering into memoranda of agreement (MOAs) with local communities, which often exacerbated conflict, particularly between those communities that were, and the majority who were not, benefiting from oil company largesse. In addition, he maintained that oil companies often did not honor their agreements, which increased resentment among the unemployed and uneducated local youths. He noted that state-level politicians, including several prominent governors, had compounded the problem by funding and arming local "cult" groups (Note: the term refers to armed gangs. End note), turning them into personal militias for political support during elections, and then disavowing them after elections were over. Such groups then began engaging in criminal activities such as oil bunkering, hostage taking, and weapons smuggling.

OBASANJO'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS DELTA GRIEVANCES

¶4. (C) Mukhtar said former President Obasanjo had instituted a series of Niger Delta consultative commissions during the last two years of his administration. All governors and select members of Delta communities were invited and encouraged to make their views and grievances known to the federal government. Obasanjo had adopted a carrot and stick approach, attempting to enforce laws while injecting significant funding into newly established federal entities like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to address

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development needs in the region. Mukhtar acknowledged that progress in the region did not reflect the massive amounts of funding provided to local and state governments, which clearly indicated that significant corruption, waste, and misuse of funds had occurred over the years. As a result, youths in the region had lost faith in traditional institutions, and community leadership had collapsed, leading to alienation and increased criminal activity.

PRESIDENT YAR'ADUA'S STRATEGY

¶5. (C) Mukhtar said that President Yar'Adua had made the Niger Delta one of his top priorities, and had directed Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, a native of the region, to open direct channels of communication with all concerned parties. As a result, some militant leaders had recently expressed a desire to lay down their arms and enter into peace talks with the government, though he cautioned that full peace remained a distant goal, as the Delta remained a "money-spinning machine" for any group with a gun. In Mukhtar's opinion, too many people in the region have strayed from their original, legitimate efforts at peaceful dissent, and instead had now resorted to criminal activities. During recent discussions with militant leaders, the GON made clear that it considered hostage-taking to be a terrorist act, and warned them they would face arrest and legal action if engaged in it. Mukhtar added that the GON had indeed arrested and initiated legal action against a number of militants involved in hostage taking. He also noted that the GON had recently hosted a meeting of selected Delta elders in Abuja, and that group had subsequently called on youths in the region to abandon violence. The GON was thus attempting to revive community leadership by identifying leaders who could be supported. Mukhtar acknowledged that the GON was fully aware of the unemployment, environmental, and political issues in the Delta, and was taking deliberate and serious steps to address them.

BUNKERING, SMUGGLING, MONEY LAUNDERING: NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

¶6. (C) Mukhtar noted that some aspects of the Niger Delta

conflict extend well beyond Nigeria's shores and the GON's control, necessitating assistance from the international community. Weapons smuggling and oil bunkering (stealing) are critical problems which need to be addressed, before the larger problems of the region can be solved. According to Mukhtar, the Nigerian navy is incapable of patrolling the entire Nigerian coast to detect and disrupt bunkering and smuggling. Both activities are closely linked, as stolen oil is often exchanged for weapons. These activities draw significant amounts of external money into the region, and involve the same international cartels. He also maintained that the GON lacked the capacity to police all of their pipelines, and needed the ability to monitor them for illegal taps. The GON is unable to control international weapons dealers who often operate with impunity, smuggling foreign-made weapons into the Delta. Mukhtar cited as an example the well-known international weapons dealer Victor Bout, and claimed that Delta militant leader Henry Okah (currently detained in Angola) is closely associated with Bout.

17. (C) In an aside, Mukhtar opined that if the Angolans were to hand Okah over to Nigeria for prosecution, militant groups in the Delta would make his release a condition for peace. At the same time, he envisioned international criticism of Nigeria for detaining Okah, should he be remanded to Nigeria. Mukhtar added that Okah had been involved in plans to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea, and was fomenting secessionist sentiment in the Delta. He complained that the international community has done little to stop known traffickers such as Bout, and asked for increased attention to and support for addressing the problem from the USG and international community.

MONEY LAUNDERING

18. (C) Mukhtar complained that while Nigerians are often criticized for being corrupt, other countries abetted larcenous individuals by welcoming their stolen funds. He claimed that some countries' economies were fully dependent

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on "dirty money," and accused their governments of openly welcoming it. Thus, Mukhtar requested more of a commitment from the international community to identify and stop the flow of funds from bunkerers and weapons smugglers.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

19. (C) Mukhtar noted the following areas where the GON needed USG and international community assistance: enhanced intelligence sharing on, and actions against, weapons traffickers like Victor Bout; "high-tech" equipment to detect and interdict weapons deliveries and oil smuggling in Nigerian territorial waters; technical assistance with equipment which allows the timely and precise detection of taps on oil pipelines -- before the oil is stolen; tracing the origins of weapons smuggled into the delta by international traffickers and later seized by Nigerian authorities.

110. (C) The Charge said the USG has been working with the GON and other partners through the Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS) to provide sensors and other equipment to assist in the detection of illegal activity along the Nigerian coastline and in the Delta. The Deputy Secretary mentioned that the USG would be happy to trace serial numbers of confiscated weapons to determine origin, an offer that had been made previously within the GGESS context. The Deputy Secretary expressed his understanding of, and concern about,

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oil bunkering and weapons smuggling, and requested that Mukhtar allow him time to consult with colleagues in Washington and examine ways to increase the U.S. level of participation in the GGESS.

TERRORISM

¶11. (C) The Deputy Secretary also solicited Mukhtar's views on terrorism, noting the GON's recent success in disrupting extremist activities in the north. Mukhtar deferred to the Director General of the SSS, who reported that the GON had arrested 11 Nigerian Islamic militants in mid October and "several more" earlier this month. The militants had been establishing a network of cells in northern Nigeria and planned to attack unspecified foreign targets, which he surmised included embassies, personnel, and other "foreign interests." The captured militants were said to have not yet revealed to the SSS their specific targets. Several other militants were said to have confirmed under interrogation that they had received training in camps in Mali and Algeria, and were in contact with Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (French acronym, GSPC) elements in both countries. The SSS also claimed to have a list of 11 Nigerians currently undergoing training in camps in Algeria and/or Mali, for which militants had provided details on their locations. One group arrested had fertilizer, explosives, and AK-47 assault rifles. Several of the detained militants were said to have been involved in uprisings in northern Nigeria in 2003 and 2005, and to have been in possession of weapons used in those incidents. The SSS is currently searching for a weapons cache buried by the group in 2005.

¶12. (C) The Director General added that the SSS has information that the militants had been expecting unidentified Pakistanis to arrive in Nigeria to assist them, but that the SSS was not yet able to identify or locate the Pakistanis. The SSS was said to have five separate teams deployed in northern Nigeria, who are still looking for two key individuals associated with the group. The SSS was keen to note that it is taking time to ensure that the investigations and arrests are handled with proper care. Lastly, the Director General noted that the GON planned to charge the militants as early as the next couple of weeks. In response to a question from the Deputy Secretary about whether northern Nigeria was a fertile breeding ground for Al Qaida, Mukhtar responded that no, the type of Islam practiced in northern Nigeria was not open to fanaticism of the kind seen in other countries.

¶13. (SBU) Participants:

U.S.

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Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte
Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer
U.S. Charge d'Affaires Lisa Piascik
Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary Gustavo Delgado
Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary Edward Wittenstein
Regional Affairs Office Chief Kevin Ward

Nigeria

National Security Advisor Major-General (Ret.) Abdullahi
Sarki Mukhtar Director General of the State Security Service
(SSS) Afakriya Gadzama Representative of the National
Intelligence Agency (NIA)
General Mukhtar's Military Assistant
Director for Internal Affairs of the National Security Adviser
Director for External Affairs of the National Security Adviser

14.(SBU) D Staff has cleared this cable.
PIASCIK